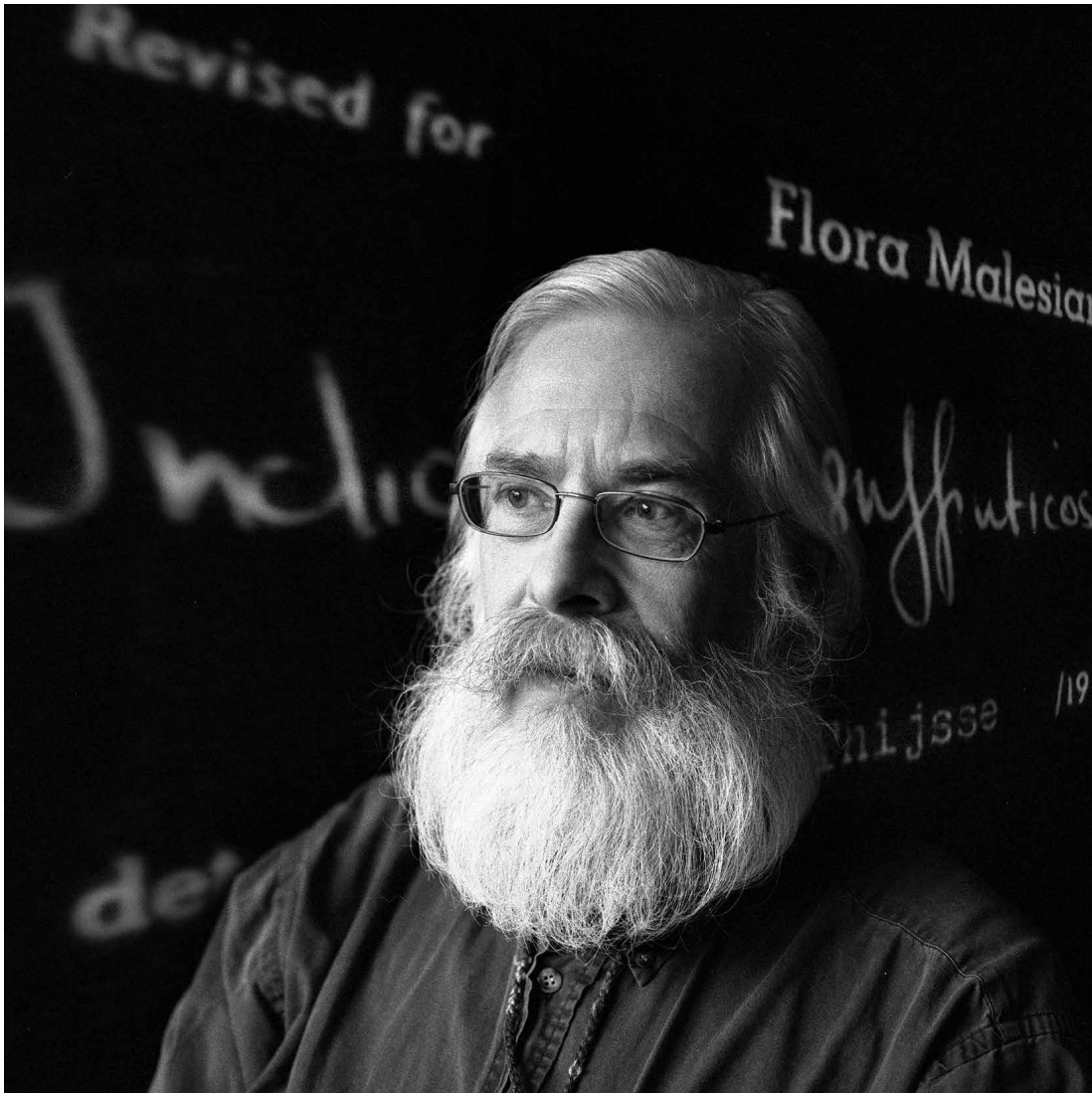




## On the 80th birthday of Frits Adema

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Portrait of Frits made by Rene Glas in March 2007.

On 18 October 1939 Fredericus Arnoldus Constantin Basil (F.A.C.B.) Adema was born in Utrecht, the Netherlands. He always disliked all his initials, just Frits suffices. Of his 80 years on the planet he spent more than 51 years working in our institute in its different guises of Rijksherbarium, Rijksherbarium/Hortus botanicus, National Herbarium of the Netherlands, and integral part of the Naturalis Biodiversity Center. Sufficient reason to devote this short laudatio to him in the journal *Blumea*, the periodical that he served as Editor-in-Chief from 1995 to 2007.

Following his high school education in The Hague, Frits embarked on his study of Biology at Leiden University in 1960. For his 'doctoraal' (MSc) programme he completed a bouquet of three research projects, witnessing his keen interest in taxonomy, natural history and biodiversity: he revised the herbaceous species of *Polygala* for 'Flora Malesiana' with Prof. C.G.G.J. van Steenis as supervisor; at the Museum of Natural History he revised New Guinean species of skink lizards (*Riopa*) under Prof. L.D. Brongersma; and under Prof. R. Hegnauer he studied the iridoid glucosides in *Lamium* and related genera. This training made him an ideal candidate for a vacancy in the 'Flora Neerlandica' project, at the time funded by

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the Netherlands Research Council (then called ZWO) for which he monographed the *Rubiaceae* and several other taxa from 1968–1971. In 1971 he was appointed to the scientific staff of the Rijksherbarium, initially to work in the group studying the Dutch and European Flora. Here he worked on *Euphrasia*, and he assisted with the course ‘Floristic biogeography’, teaching students plant recognition, with as highlight a week in the small village Festieux, northern France, where in the evenings poker with dice was played; losers had to pay a round of drinks. Luckily for Frits, he had stamina for liquor.

From 1987 until his retirement in 2004, Frits worked in the research group Tropical Phanerogams on Flora Malesiana revisions. The latter move was a swap with Ruud van der Meijden, who fervently wished to change his research on Malesian plants (*Xanthophyllum*) with work on the Flora of the Netherlands. In 1991 Frits defended his PhD thesis, comprising a monograph of *Cupaniopsis* (*Sapindaceae*). The family *Sapindaceae* had been chosen as a pilot project for cooperative Flora Malesiana writing by the then quite senior Piet Leenhouts and the younger duo of Frits Adema and Peter van Welzen. This proved a success and the *Sapindaceae* appeared in print in 1994. Subsequently, Frits embarked on the Flora Malesiana treatment of the papilionoid *Leguminosae*, taking over from the late Rob Geesink. An immense challenge, which is approaching its completion these months when he is regularly handing in generic treatments to

the editor of the Flora. For this species-rich and difficult group he has been coordinating a group of taxonomists in the Asia-Pacific region, while contributing the bulk of the (revised) revisions himself. For a long time Frits, together with Max van Balgooy and Willem de Wilde, organised the pre-identification (up to family or genus level) of newly arrived Malesian specimens on a weekly basis; Frits acted as the secretary of the group, collecting the specimens and distributing them afterwards to experts for further identification.

Frits is a convinced bachelor, proclaiming that the ‘bachelor is the buttress of society’ in the last proposition, appended to his PhD thesis in 1991. Indeed he is also a buttress for our institute, faithfully coming in 4 days a week, and working hard on his taxonomic and floristic projects. His modesty almost masks his friendly and very helpful personality. When helping people he always displays an encyclopaedic knowledge on plants. Over the years Frits contributed to a number of plant biodiversity courses; for instance, he presented overviews of the *Sapindaceae* and *Fabaceae* during the course Plant Families of the Tropics. For a long period he edited the annual survey of research projects that BSc and MSc students could choose from at the herbarium. At times Frits can be stubborn and assertive, upset if people dare to organise something on a Friday, his free day. All other weekdays he is present, punctually from 07.50 h till 15.00 h. We hope that he will continue his good work in Naturalis for many years to come.